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Study
Report
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Why Promotable Female Officers Leave the Army

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and Jacquelyn Scarville
U.S. Army Research Institute

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This paper presents the findings of a study designed to identify the reasons female Captains who were eligible for promotion to Major decided to take a monetary incentive and voluntarily leave the Army. Two sets of interviews were conducted: 73% of the females on the promotion list who decided to leave were interviewed by telephone and another group of Active Army officers was interviewed in person to determine the factors they considered in making their career decisions. The results indicated that (a) career decisions are based on multiple factors, (b) career decisions are based on an assessment of current conditions or progress and on perceived long-term career conditions and opportunities, (c) there is much overlap in the factors considered by those who decided to leave and those who have not decided to leave at this point, and (d) there is much overlap in factors considered by males and females. Both males and females took the following into account in their career decisions: career/promotion opportunities, equitable treatment, family issues, monetary incentives, and issues related to current and future downsizing and force restructuring. In addition, the female officers gave the following as reasons for (Continued)				
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Study Report 93-04

Why Promotable Female Officers Leave the Army

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FOREWORD

The Leadership and Organizational Change Technical Area of the Manpower and Personnel Research Division, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) conducts research on leadership, personnel, and organizational issues of significance to the U.S. Army. One area of organizational change is the downsizing of the force. As part of this effort, the Army is offering a number of bonus programs as incentives for soldiers to voluntarily leave. The reasons individuals choose to take advantage of these programs are important input for the force restructuring process.

This report documents the results of interviews to identify factors considered in the career decisions of Army Officers in this time of downsizing. The research was conducted in response to a 17 July 1992 tasking from the Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, to identify the reasons why female Captains who made the promotion list for Major decided to take a monetary incentive and voluntarily leave the Army. The results of these interviews were given to the Vice Chief of Staff, Director of Military Personnel Management and Director of the Human Resources Directorate in August 1992.



EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Director

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The authors would like to thank Sally Bell for her diligent assistance in locating many of the subjects and conducting telephone interviews. Without her willingness to "drop everything" and come to our assistance during a critical window of opportunity, it is unlikely that we would have been able to have contacted as many individuals as we did.

WHY PROMOTABLE FEMALE OFFICERS LEAVE THE ARMY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Requirement:

In 1992, as part of the Army's downsizing plan to meet end-strength commitments for fiscal year 1993 and beyond, monetary incentive offers were made to encourage soldiers to voluntarily leave the Army. The factors that individuals consider in making the decision to leave the Army under a monetary incentive program need to be understood because of their implications for future force restructuring policy.

Procedure:

Two sets of interviews were conducted: (a) telephone interviews with 30 of the 41 female Captains who made the promotion list for Major but chose to leave the Army under a monetary incentive program, and (b) in-person, individual interviews with 3 female and 12 male Active Army company grade Officers. The telephone interviews focused on the reasons for deciding to leave the Army. The in-person interviews focused on the factors considered in the ongoing process of deciding whether to continue a career in the Army or leave. The telephone group was the main focus of this project. However, the second set of interviews was conducted to indicate whether the reasons for leaving were specific to this group of females on the promotion list or whether they were commonly used criteria for Officers' career decisions.

Findings:

Results from both sets of interviews indicated that individuals have not one but multiple, and often interrelated, reasons for their career decisions. The one reason that first made them think about leaving the Army is only part of the story. There are reasons that made them finally decide to leave and additional factors in-between. Also, they may first think of leaving years before they finally decide to leave.

The findings also indicated that many of the factors considered by those who were leaving the Army were the same as the factors considered by Officers staying in the Army in making their career decisions. For example, job/career opportunities, especially in this time of downsizing, were an important factor for both stayers and leavers. As part of their assessment of job/career opportunities, both assessed their competitiveness based on their previous and anticipated assignments, their past and

likely future performance ratings, feedback from their branch assignments Officer, the experiences of their peers, and the career uncertainty and limitations they were expecting as a result of downsizing. Other factors considered by both stayers and leavers were family issues (e.g., impact of moving on spouse, starting a family, time with family) and monetary incentives (exit bonus, more money in civilian sector). The above issues were similar for both males and females.

In addition, several factors were specific to females in both sets of interviews. These included (a) treatment/equal opportunity issues, such as the perception that valued assignments (not necessarily combat assignments) were not open to competition for females, gender-based discrimination, and sexual harassment and the Army's handling of it; and (b) additional family issues, such as past and future problems that female Officers have getting joint domicile with their military spouses and child care. For those females leaving the Army, it appeared to be either the cumulative weight of multiple factors or "one final issue," added to the multiple issues they were already dealing with, that tipped the balance toward leaving.

Utilization of Findings:

The recognition that individuals have multiple, often interdependent reasons for their career decisions will have an impact on the way we think about, design surveys for, and report career decision research. The findings with respect to the factors female and male Officers consider in deciding whether to remain in the Army will provide input for the formulation of future human resource development and manpower policies.

WHY PROMOTABLE FEMALE OFFICERS LEAVE THE ARMY

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WHY PROMOTABLE FEMALE OFFICERS LEAVE THE ARMY

Introduction

Almost immediately after the hostilities ended in the Persian Gulf, the Army turned its attention to downsizing the force to meet its end-strength commitments for fiscal year 1993. As part of the downsizing plan, monetary incentives to exit the Army were offered to selected year groups of commissioned officers. In July 1992, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) was tasked to identify the reasons one particular subset of officers, 41 female captains who made the promotion list for major, voluntarily decided to leave the Army with a monetary incentive.

The tasking was prompted by two concerns. The first had to do with issues of downsizing and retaining the highest quality force. To accomplish the downsizing, the Army encouraged those who were at risk for involuntary separation to consider leaving under one of the monetary incentive programs. However, it was not clear why officers approved for promotion would choose to leave. From an Army perspective, being on the promotion list should signal that the officer is considered high quality and is guaranteed to be promoted. It should also indicate a decreased likelihood of being asked to leave involuntarily--at least in the immediate future.

The second concern, and the reason for focusing specifically on females, was to determine whether there were specific organizational issues that adversely impacted on this set of officers. In the current U.S. climate, there is a heightened awareness that organizational issues, such as gender discrimination, glass ceiling limitations on advancement to top-level positions, sexual harassment, and policies affecting families, may negatively or differentially impact on females (e.g., Hoster, B. L., 1992; Adelsberger, B., 1992). The number of studies on the glass ceiling phenomena have increased (e.g., Morrison, Whit, Velsor, & Center for Creative Leadership, 1992; Catalyst, 1991) and recent laws, such as the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 and the Defense Authorization Act of 1992, that deal with issues of gender discrimination in the workplace have been passed. Also, sexual harassment cases have gained much attention in the news. In addition, federal government agencies continue to study and monitor these issues (e.g., U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1992; U.S. Department of Labor, 1992; Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, 1992). Thus, the concern in this research was to identify these or any other organizational issues that may have influenced the female officers' decision to leave the Army.

To accomplish this tasking, two sets of interviews were conducted: (a) telephone interviews with female captains who made the promotion list for major but chose to exit the Army under a monetary incentive program, and (b) in-person, individual interviews with male and female Active Army first lieutenants and captains. The telephone interviews focused on the reasons for deciding to leave the Army. The in-person interviews centered on the factors being considered in the on-going process of deciding whether to continue a career in the Army or leave. The telephone group was the main focus of this project; however, the second set of interviews was conducted to get an indication of whether the reasons for leaving were specific to the group of females on the promotion list or whether they were commonly used criteria for officers' career decisions.

The telephone interview method was selected for the female officers who had already decided to leave under one of the incentive offers because these individuals were scattered among different locations and in the process of leaving the Army. If they were not contacted quickly before they left, they would be much harder to locate afterward. Ideally, we would like to have interviewed the male captains on the promotion list to major who decided to leave the Army under one of the monetary incentive programs. Unfortunately, this was not possible.

The in-person interview method was selected for the second set of interviews because longer, individual interviews could be scheduled at one large installation. The interviews were conducted with a small, convenience sample of both male and female company grade officers who were available at the same time the telephone interviews were being conducted. The subjects, instruments, and procedures for the in-person and telephone interviews are described below.

Method

Subjects

Telephone interview group. This group consisted of 30 of the 41 female captains who made the promotion list for major and who chose to leave the Army with a monetary incentive. (The remaining 11 on the list could not be located.) Those we interviewed had either already left the Army or had plans to leave within the next several months. At the time of the interview, 20 were still captains promotable and 10 had already been promoted to major. They were from the following nine branches: Adjutant General, Aviation, Engineer, Military Intelligence, Military Police, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Signal, and Transportation.

The majority of the women had military spouses ($n=16$), 8 had civilian spouses, and 6 were single. Most ($n=17$) had children in the home. Of the 13 who did not have children in the home, 4 were expecting their first child.

In-person interview group. In-person, individual interviews were conducted with 15 officers at one large Army installation. Although the original troop request was for a 50% male-50% female sample of captains and majors, this sample was not available during the time allotted due to other commitments. The 15-officer group had fewer females and the officers were of somewhat lower rank than had been requested. It included 12 males and 3 females. Three were first lieutenants, 2 were first lieutenants promotable, and 10 were captains. They were from the following four branches: Field Artillery, Quartermaster, Ordnance, and Engineer. The majority were married to a civilian spouse (n=10), 1 was married to a military spouse, and 4 were single. Most had no children (n=9), 5 had children, and 1 was expecting his first child.

Instruments

Telephone interview instrument. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended and forced-choice questions (see Appendix A) focusing on identifying the factors influencing the officer's decision to leave the Army. It began with an open-ended question about why the respondent decided to leave the Army, followed by another open-ended question asking if anything else influenced the decision to leave. The next two questions asked when and why the person (a) first started to think about leaving, and (b) made the final decision to leave. If it was not already volunteered at this point, the interviewer asked whether the decision was made before or after making the promotion list, and if it was before or after the availability of the monetary incentive. The remaining questions addressed the respondent's assessment of whether: (a) she would have been allowed to remain in the Army until retirement, (b) she already had a civilian job waiting for her, (c) downsizing or conflict between work and family influenced the decision to leave, and (d) the Army could have taken steps to convince her to stay. The final question asked whether her experiences as a female soldier influenced her decision to leave. The interviews generally lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

In-person interview instrument. The in-person interview guide also consisted of open-ended and forced-choice questions (see Appendix B) and was designed to include the questions asked in the telephone interview if an officer had decided to leave under one of the monetary incentive programs. The questions guided the officers through their careers from commissioning to their current assignment. The interview began with a number of demographic and precommissioning questions, such as source of commission, date of commission, precommissioning branch and assignment preference, and career intentions before commissioning.

The next two sets of questions were designed to ascertain the factors considered at each career decision point to compare to the telephone interview responses. The first set included

questions about the officer's experience at each rank level (second lieutenant through captain). These included questions about courses taken, positions at each rank, and factors that determined their assignment to these positions.

The second set of questions pertained to decision factors relevant to the officer's current and future career plans. Officers were asked about their next assignment and their future career plans; if there were things that helped them get ahead in their career or things that held them back; if they had a mentor or if anyone had helped them get a particular position during their career; whether things currently happening in the Army were impacting on their career plans and what might cause them to change their minds about staying in the Army.

Procedure

Telephone interview procedure. Telephone interviews were completed during July and August, 1992, with 30 (73%) of the female officers who made the promotion list for major who decided to leave the Army under a monetary incentive program. All of the individuals contacted willingly agreed to participate in the interview.

Typically, multiple calls were necessary to identify valid home or work telephone numbers for each respondent. Formal services such as Army post locators and local city directory information operators were used to get accurate telephone numbers. This effort was supplemented by the assistance of personal contacts (e.g., at Army posts, ARI field units). If the officers could not be reached at work because they had already separated, were on terminal leave, or out of the office for some other reason, they were interviewed at home.

Upon reaching a respondent, the interviewer identified herself and the U.S. Army Research Institute and explained that the Institute was doing research on officers' careers and the reasons underlying the separation decision. The interviewer then asked for the respondent's agreement to participate in a 10 to 15 minute interview and asked if it was convenient to talk. Most respondents completed the interview at this initial contact. A few arranged for a later time.

The interviewer then proceeded through the interview guide prompting only for clarification. Reasons for leaving were identified with open-ended questions only. At no time did interviewers ask the female officers to respond to a specific set of reasons for leaving the Army.

In-person interview procedure. Each interview began with introductions and an explanation that the purpose of the interview was to gain insight into the factors that officers considered in their career decisions. A privacy statement was given to the officer to read, sign, and date. All 15 officers agreed to participate.

The interviewer followed the guide provided in Appendix B prompting only when needed for clarification. As in the telephone interviews, the procedure called for eliciting information from the respondents, not for providing a list of reasons to which respondents would provide their reactions. Each individual interview lasted approximately 50 minutes.

Results

Telephone Interviews

Most of the female officers interviewed were very positive about the Army and their Army experience. They indicated that their decision to leave was not an easy one to make. Results reported below indicate that the decision to leave was often complex.

Reasons for Leaving

Table 1 shows the reasons given by each of the 30 female officers for leaving the Army. As can be seen from this table, all but one officer volunteered multiple reasons for making the decision to leave. The number of reasons given ranged from 1 to 9.

Table 1 is provided in lieu of a simple table of total results to: (a) demonstrate the variability in the sets of reasons given by each individual, and (b) stress that since the reasons (indicated by asterisks) were volunteered, one cannot conclude that, upon direct questioning, other reasons might not also have been included. Thus, the asterisks do not represent a total, exhaustive set of reasons for a person, but probably represent the most salient reasons for the individual's decision to leave. Objective counts, totals, and percentages for each reason are, thus, not appropriate for this table. However, from a broader perspective, the following provides the number of individuals giving at least one reason for leaving in four areas of concern as a context of issues for the total group interviewed:

- (a) Army career/job issues, n=22 (73%)
- (b) Treatment/equal opportunity issues, n=15 (50%)
- (c) Family issues, n=22 (73%)
- (d) Monetary incentives, n=11 (37%)

Table 1

Reasons Female Captains on the Promotion List Gave for Leaving the Army

Reasons For Leaving	RESPONDENTS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<u>Army Job/Career Related</u>										
Valued assignments not open to competition for females	*				*			*	*	
Underutilized skills				*						
Lack of quality leadership					*		*			
Uncertainty about being allowed career/retirement										
Medical profile										
Passed over before										
Not selected for CGSC		*								
Had questionable OER										*
Anticipates negative impact of downsizing								*		*
<u>Treatment</u>										
Gender-based discrimination			*		*		*		*	*
Experienced sexual harassment	*		*						*	
Army didn't handle reported sexual harassment well	*		*		*				*	
<u>Family</u>										
Past/future problem getting joint domicile	*	*	*			*	*			
Civilian spouse can't/doesn't want to move				*						
Child care	*								*	
Pregnancy	*									
Time for children				*						
Other job/family conflict										
<u>Monetary Incentives</u>										
Bonus	*					*				
More money in civilian sector	*								*	
<u>Other</u>										
Control over life									*	
More job opportunities in civilian section										
Already achieved goals	*									

NOTE: * Denotes that the respondent gave it as a reason for leaving

Table 1 (Continued)

Reasons For Leaving	RESPONDENTS									
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<u>Army Job/Career Related</u>										
Valued assignments not open to competition for females	*	*			*					
Underutilized skills	*				*					
Lack of quality leadership										
Uncertainty about being allowed career/retirement							*			
Medical profile								*		
Passed over before										*
Not selected for CGSC				*					*	
Had questionable OER										
Anticipates negative impact of downsizing										
<u>Treatment</u>										
Gender-based discrimination	*	*		*	*	*				
Experienced sexual harassment					*					
Army didn't handle reported sexual harassment well										
<u>Family</u>										
Past/future problem getting joint domicile			*			*	*			
Civilian spouse can't/doesn't want to move				*						*
Child care			*						*	
Pregnancy								*		
Time for children					*			*		
Other job/family conflict										*
<u>Monetary Incentives</u>										
Bonus			*			*	*			
More money in civilian sector										
<u>Other</u>										
Control over life										
More job opportunities in civilian sector										
Already achieved goals										

Table 1 (Continued)

Reasons For Leaving	RESPONDENTS									
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<u>Army Job/Career Related</u>										
Valued assignments not open to competition for females										
Underutilized skills										
Lack of quality leadership			*							
Uncertainty about being allowed career/retirement		*			*	*				
Medical profile				*						
Passed over before										
Not selected for CGSC								*		
Had questionable OER										
Anticipates negative impact of downsizing			*							
<u>Treatment</u>										
Gender-based discrimination				*		*		*	*	
Experienced sexual harassment										
Army didn't handle reported sexual harassment well										
<u>Family</u>										
Past/future problem getting joint domicile								*	*	
Civilian spouse can't/doesn't want to move		*		*						*
Child care					*					
Pregnancy										
Time for children		*			*			*	*	
Other job/family conflict				*			*	*	*	*
<u>Monetary Incentives</u>										
Bonus	*	*	*		*	*				
More money in civilian sector	*									
<u>Other</u>										
Control over life	*		*							
More job opportunities in civilian sector				*				*		
Already achieved goals										

A description of each of the areas of concern covered in Table 1 follows:

Army career/job. Specific reasons they gave in this area concerned the limitations of jobs and assignments. There was concern that jobs that were available for females were not the "valued" assignments for promotions and that females were not given the opportunity to compete for the good operational or tactical assignments. They indicated that females were not considered for certain kinds of non-combat jobs because senior leadership considered them "male" assignments. Also, they were concerned that downsizing would exacerbate the problems they already experienced with limited access to prized assignments, or would possibly eliminate jobs and opportunities that were currently available.

Not all of the officers interviewed by telephone were fully confident they could stay until retirement. When asked "how sure are you that you would have been allowed to stay in the Army until retirement," 57% were less than definitely sure they could (4 said probably or definitely no; 5 were unsure; 8 responded probably yes) and 43% indicated they were definitely sure.

In addition to anticipated promotion or job limitations due to downsizing, other reasons for not being sure they could stay until retirement included being previously passed over for promotion, having a non-competitive performance evaluation, not being selected for Command and General Staff College (CGSC), or having a permanent medical profile. Eight of the 30 officers interviewed listed one of these latter reasons for leaving; however, it was never the only reason given.

Treatment/equal opportunity. The treatment/equal opportunity reasons related to gender discrimination and to sexual harassment--two different issues. Gender discrimination was cited by 14 of the 30 respondents; personally experienced sexual harassment was cited by 4 of the 30. Indications of gender discrimination went from verbal expressions of a negative attitude toward females in the Army by senior leaders (e.g., "it's a man's Army" and "women don't belong in the Army"), to commanders not willing to be briefed by female officers, to purposely being given assignments in order to limit female officers' career potential. In addition, recommendations for certain jobs were not given to females, and female officers were told they could not get command because they had a small child at home.

From the comments made in the interviews, concern over sexual harassment issues was closely tied to the Army's handling of the reported sexual harassment. Although the sexual harassment instances were distressing, the negative way the Army handled them exacerbated the problem. In some cases, female officers who considered themselves competent, high performing, and dedicated were treated as outcasts and were subjected to

interrogation and ridicule because they reported the incident. Some respondents reported that the incident was minimized and the behavior was excused without any action taken. In addition, the female who was the victim was treated as "the problem." This perceived inconsistency between what the Army says ("sexual harassment will not be tolerated"), and what it does (lack of command support and investigation) left the female officers angry and disappointed with Army leadership.

Family. Twenty-four (80%) of the female officers in the telephone interviews were married (16 to military spouses and 8 to civilian spouses). Twenty-one of these married officers expressed concerns about joint domicile. For the officers married to a military spouse, it was the lack of Army cooperation in assigning both to jobs in the same geographical area. For officers with civilian spouses, the issue was that their spouse had a career and could not find an appropriate job or did not want to change a job as a result of the Army's scheduling. Officers expected the joint domicile issues to be worse in the future as a result of downsizing.

Child care problems were especially complex for dual-military couples. When the couples had children but were not co-located, the female in the couple usually kept the children and thus, in essence, she became a single parent. Concerns about children also included the lack of quality time with the family and being an "absentee" parent because of job/time demands of the Army career.

Monetary incentives. One-third of the female officers interviewed said that the bonus was one of the reasons they were leaving. A small number indicated that making more money in the civilian sector was a reason for leaving. The final decision to leave was made by 25 of the 30 female officers after bonuses were available. However, no one indicated that monetary reasons were the only reason they were leaving the Army.

Other. Six officers gave reasons categorized as "other," including taking control of their lives and better opportunities in the civilian job market. These individuals were tired of being told what to do and when to do it by the Army; they wanted to take control of their lives. They felt that the opportunities outside the Army were better for their skills or for accomplishing their career goals.

The Decision to Leave

Slightly over half of the female officers interviewed indicated that their final decision to leave the Army was made after they were on the promotion list. Twenty-four (80%) said that downsizing had influenced their decision; 20 (67%) said that conflict between their family and their career influenced their decision; and 17 (57%) indicated that their experiences as a female soldier had influenced their decision to leave.

Most did not have a civilian job. When asked, 4 of the 30 said definitely yes they had a civilian job, 6 said probably yes, 2 were unsure, and 18 said probably/definitely no. In some cases, respondents said they did not intend to get a job right away; in other cases, they indicated that the bonus provided time to look for the right opportunity or to get additional training or a degree.

What Might Have Influenced Them to Stay

In response to the question "What could the Army have done to convince you to stay," six female officers indicated "nothing." The remaining 24 offered the following suggestions:

- Provide more/better job opportunities for female officers
- Promote good officers faster
- Provide longer assignments in good jobs
- Provide assurance of joint domicile, at least 50% of the time.
- Provide child care in Europe
- Show more concern for soldiers' welfare
- Fight to keep good soldiers
- Handle sexual harassment issues fairly
 - don't say one thing and do another
 - don't victimize the victim
 - don't excuse behavior because of "good ole boy" network
- Provide longer maternity leave
- Offer branch transfers
- Do something about the issues, don't just do surveys.

In-Person vs. Telephone Interviews

The in-person interviews allowed a comparison of whether the concerns raised by female officers leaving the Army were different from those considered in career decisions for officers staying in the Army. Findings from the in-person interviews can be grouped into six factors that officers considered when making career decisions:

- (a) Army career/job issues
- (b) Treatment/equal opportunity issues
- (c) Family issues

- (d) Monetary incentives
- (e) Negative impact of downsizing on Army environment
- (f) Window of opportunity for civilian career

Table 2 provides a list of specific reasons within each factor that were mentioned in each group. The "X's" indicate if the reason was mentioned by one or more individuals in the telephone interviews or by one or more individuals in the in-person interviews. As Table 2 illustrates, there was a great deal of overlap between the two groups of respondents. As in the telephone interviews, the reasons given by the in-person respondents did not represent a total, exhaustive set of reasons for a person, but probably represented the most salient reasons for individual career decisions, whether the decision was related to their next assignment, to leaving the Army, or to staying in the Army.

Similarities

As indicated in Table 2, there was substantial similarity between the groups in the specific issues within the first four factors. The set of career issues that were mentioned in both interview groups included: Concerns over promotability, being selected for valued jobs or assignments, under-utilization of skills, lack of quality leadership, uncertainty about retirement, likelihood of getting command, and the negative impact of downsizing. Lack of time with the family, conflict between Army job and family, longer work hours, and the advantage of the bonus or availability of jobs in the civilian marketplace were also mentioned by both groups. Most of the treatment issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment and the Army's handling of it were also mentioned by female officers in both groups.

Differences

Female telephone respondents. Female officers who were leaving the Army mentioned a medical profile in their record, being previously passed over for promotion, and not being selected for CGSC as specific career issues they considered when deciding to leave. Specific family issues they mentioned included past/future problems getting joint domicile, child care, and pregnancy. Two female officers also mentioned gaining control over their life and already achieving their goals as reasons for leaving.

In-person respondents. Company grade officers interviewed mentioned that they were considering whether they had completed their obligation, whether they were generally competitive with their peers, the likelihood they would receive an excellent Officer Evaluation Report (OER) for their command experience, and educational opportunities. Many indicated that they had not yet reached the point in their Army career when they would have to choose whether to stay or leave. The only treatment issues that

Table 2

Issues Considered in Career Decisions: Female Captains on Promotion List vs. Other Company Grade Officers

	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>In-Person</u>
<u>Army Career/Job Issues</u>		
Completion of obligation		X
Valued assignments not open to competition for females	X	X*
Probability of being selected for key slots	X	X
Under-utilized skills	X	X
Lack of quality leadership	X	X
Uncertainty about being allowed career/retirement	X	X
Medical profile	X	
Passed over before	X	
Not selected for CGSC	X	
Questionable OER	X	X
OER competitive with peers		X
Anticipates negative impact of downsizing	X	X
Educational opportunities		X
Likelihood of getting command	X	X
Likelihood of excellent OER for command experience		X
Advice from branch assignment officer/Cmdr/Old-boy network	X	X
<u>Treatment/Equal Opportunity Issues</u>		
Gender-based discrimination	X	X*
Personally experienced sexual harassment	X	X*
Army didn't handle reported sexual harassment well	X	X*
Racial discrimination		X
<u>Family Issues</u>		
Past/future problem getting joint domicile	X	X*
Civilian spouse can't/doesn't want to move	X	X
Child care	X	
Pregnancy	X	
Time for children	X	X
Other job/family conflict	X	X

* Mentioned by only females in the in-person interviews

Table 2 (continued)

	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>In-Person</u>
<u>Monetary Incentives</u>		
Bonus	X	X
More money in civilian sector	X	X
<u>Negative Impact of Downsizing on Army Environment</u>		
Longer work hours	X	X
Burnout	X	X
Continual crisis management		X
Competitiveness/backstabbing/ less cooperation		X
Increased workload and fewer people		X
<u>Window of Opportunity for Civilian Career</u>		
Age/timing for change of career		X
Frequent target of civilian recruiters		X
<u>Other</u>		
Control over life	X	
More/different job opportunities in civilian sector	X	X
Already achieved goals	X	
Educational opportunities in civilian sector		X

were different between the two groups was the mention of racial discrimination by a male officer in the in-person group.

A number of people in the in-person group mentioned that they were frequently the target of civilian recruiters and that these recruiters encouraged them to make a career change while they were still marketable (about age 30). They also mentioned several specific downsizing problems that were factors they were considering in their decisions: continual crisis management in their jobs, an increased workload with fewer people to accomplish it, and more competitiveness and backstabbing and less cooperation within and across units.

Gender Similarities and Differences

The issues raised by the female and male officers were remarkably similar, as indicated above. However, there were several issues that seemed to be specific to the female officers from both groups. These included valued assignments closed to females, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and the Army's handling of it, and child care. Although both males and females mentioned they were concerned about having enough time for their children, only female officers specifically mentioned problems with child care. In addition, the female officers also mentioned the issue of getting joint domicile (female officers were more likely than males to be married to a military spouse) and the magnified child care problems when they could not get joint domicile and became a single parent. The female officers from both groups believed that all these problems would be exacerbated by downsizing.

Discussion and Implications

The primary purposes of this research were to find out why female officers being promoted to major would choose to leave the Army, and whether there were organizational factors that contributed to their decision to leave. Overall, the findings indicated that the decision to leave was complex. In fact, most of the female officers interviewed said that their decision to leave was not an easy one and that they were very positive about the Army and their Army careers. The sections below summarize the reasons they decided to leave and the related organizational issues.

Why They Left

The females being promoted indicated that they had not one but multiple, and often interrelated, reasons to leave the Army. Many of the factors they took into account were similar to those other officers took into account in making their career decisions (such as whether to take a particular assignment or location, or to continue their Army career) and some were more specifically female issues.

Both the females who had decided to leave the Army and the other male and female officers we interviewed indicated that they took the following into account in their career decisions: career/promotion opportunities, equitable treatment, family issues, and issues related to current and future downsizing and force restructuring. They also considered factors that the Army's chain teaching program and branch assignments officers passed on as reasons to strongly consider taking a monetary incentive to leave the Army. These reasons included previously being passed over for promotion, a non-competitive OER, not being selected for CGSC, etc. Although one might assume that these reasons would not apply to individuals being promoted, in fact, 6 (20%) of the females on the promotion list cited at least one of these reasons as having influenced their decision. Although they had made the promotion list this time, they felt that these factors would limit their careers in the future.

The reasons not given by the females for leaving the Army are also worthy of note. For example, unlike the married, male, junior Army officers who responded to surveys in 1988 and 1989 (Teplitzky, 1991), the decision of females on the major's promotion list in 1992 did not appear to be a lack of organizational identification. In fact, many of the females emphasized that although they had decided to leave the Army, they still were very attached to it and felt very positive about it. Also unlike the junior Army officers in 1988 and 1989, perceived career prospects were a very important part of the female officers' decisions. Future career prospects also came up as an important factor being considered by the male company grade officers, as well.

This difference in the factors being considered by the groups interviewed for this paper appears to be more than just a gender difference. It may be influenced by the organizational changes taking place from 1989 to the present, namely, downsizing and restructuring the force. As an example, the female officers who decided to leave perceived that the Army was putting constraints on their careers, that there were fewer opportunities as field grade officers, and that there were no guarantees about their long-term career, promotion potential, or likelihood of battalion command. They also believed that downsizing would exacerbate these problems effectively tipping the balance so the costs outweighed the benefits of their demanding Army career.

All of the officers interviewed, whether they had decided to leave or not, indicated uncertainty about their future careers. In addition, downsizing was already increasing their work hours and job stress, and they thought good officers were leaving the Army. They also felt that the Army was placing too much emphasis on "no mistakes" and on "playing it safe."

Organizational Issues Specific to the Female Officers

Although we were not able to interview male officers on the promotion list to identify the gender issues in the same population, we were able to isolate gender-related organizational issues. This set of issues was identified by all the females we interviewed (those who had already decided to leave and those still on active duty), but not by the male officers. These issues included: valued non-combat and combat assignments closed to females, other gender-based discrimination (e.g., verbal comments indicating that because they were female, a mother, or pregnant they were not valued in a particular assignment), sexual harassment and the Army's handling of it, and joint domicile/child care. Each is summarized below.

Gender Discrimination. Gender discrimination is defined as discrimination based solely on an individual's membership in the subgroup, "female," and is distinguished from sexual harassment because it does not specifically have a sexual component. Gender discrimination, as in racial discrimination, is often based on a set of a priori assumptions, often biased and detrimental, concerning the abilities, competence, status, and roles of a particular subgroup which, in turn, may lead to differential treatment of individuals because they are "females." Department of the Army Regulation 600-20 expressly forbids discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or ethnic group.

However, half of the females interviewed for this project reported gender discrimination as a factor in their career decisions. The comments they made about the issue of gender discrimination indicate that discrimination against females, despite the policy cited above, is culturally "accepted." When commanders allow expression of negative attitudes toward women in verbal comments or in actual behaviors, they are communicating that these behaviors are "acceptable." Most of the women interviewed indicated that they had been subjected to both subtle and not so subtle gender discrimination throughout their careers. Now, however, with the limitations to promotions and the lack of assurance of retirement or challenging assignments, these discriminatory behaviors were, in some cases, becoming less tolerable.

The fact that gender-based discrimination was frequently cited in connection with the behavior of the individual's higher commander might lead one to conclude it is just a function of the "older generation attitudes." However, it is clear from a recent U.S. General Accounting Office study (Jones, 1992), that the issue is currently present in the younger generation. According to Jones, 45% of the women at the U.S. Military Academy are reporting negative attitudes toward females in taunts that male cadets make such as "women don't belong here."

Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment is defined in Army Regulation 600-20 as involving "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when ...[it is] a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career; ... used as a basis for career or employment decisions; ... [or] it creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment."

Sexual harassment alone was seen as a reason for leaving, but the handling of it made the problem much worse. Although the harasser might have been one individual, officers perceived it as the Army as a whole that was responsible for the consequences--nothing being done to the harasser and the subsequent negative treatment, intimidation, and ostracizing of the complainer.

A sexual harassment incident was also a powerful influence on the career decision ("it was the straw that broke the camel's back; I'm just not going to put up with this [expletive] anymore."). One incident was enough to leave individuals feeling betrayed and less committed to their Army career that was a high priority before the incident.

Joint Domicile. Joint domicile for dual military couples is known to be an important career decision factor (Teplitzky, Shelly, & Nogami, 1988) and incorporates both concerns about being away from the spouse and child care issues. For the females in our sample, the issue appeared to be further exacerbated by the anticipation of even greater problems of obtaining joint domicile in the future. They reasoned that the fewer career enhancing opportunities that would be available to them at this stage in their careers and the impact of downsizing would together result in even fewer opportunities for joint domicile. The female officers we interviewed realized that the needs of the Army often meant they would not have joint domicile, however, they wanted the Army to be more cooperative in solving the problem and meeting them half-way.

Implications

This research shows that putting females on the promotion list is not, in and of itself, sufficient to keep them in the Army. Because officers are looking ahead at their longer-range career possibilities and the organizational issues that impact on their jobs and their quality of life, they consider more than just a current promotion. If the Army wishes to communicate to officers that the Army wants them to stay, it is necessary to address the organizational issues that are impacting their careers and, in turn, their career decisions.

The organizational issue of major concern to all officers, reported throughout this paper, is downsizing the Army (see Kozlowski, Chao, Smith, Hedlund, & Walz [1991] for a further discussion of downsizing). The perceived negative impact of the downsizing process (fewer people, longer hours, increased

competitiveness, fear of making mistakes, and job stress) coupled with the uncertainty of their careers in the future appear to be having a twofold effect. First, downsizing is exacerbating problems or issues that have existed for some time making them less tolerable. And, second, downsizing is an additional problem to deal with because of its impact on their immediate job and the future--job and command opportunities, promotion potential, and retirement potential.

Some of the uncertainty about downsizing could be alleviated by additional information on what the future will "look like" after downsizing: How promotions and retirement/benefits will be affected, future availability of jobs and promotion/command opportunities, etc. The Army has actively disseminated a great deal of information through its chain teaching on assessing individual chances for involuntary separation and on factors to consider in making the separation decision. What appears to be missing is positive information on the "future Army." It is difficult to make a positive--stay in the Army--informed decision without some information about the organization of the future.

The additional organizational issues are somewhat more specific to the female officers. It is clear that, with respect to gender discrimination, much has changed in the Army since the Women's Armed Services Integration Act which put a ceiling of 2% on the proportion of women in the Services, excluding nurses, and prohibited females from becoming generals or admirals. Currently, approximately 12% of the officer corps are females. However, there is still a perception that there is a great deal of gender discrimination -- even without the combat exclusion issue. Female officers report that it ranges from open expressions of the conviction that women should not be in the military (see also Mitchell, 1989) to exclusion from desirable, career enhancing assignments that are not officially coded to exclude females.

The experiences of the women interviewed indicate that there is a strong need to clarify what constitutes gender discrimination and the Army policy with respect to it. Without further elaboration, the gender discrimination portion of AR 600-20 may not be clear enough for leaders to recognize the discrimination when it occurs.

Much of the discrimination reported appears to be leader initiated and/or leader sanctioned. As the Army continually reviews its training and policies with respect to gender discrimination, differentiated from sexual harassment, a number of suggestions emerge from the findings in this paper. In addition to addressing the Army policy on gender discrimination, the training would benefit from including very specific discriminatory behaviors, including incidents involving single women, pregnant women, and mothers. Also, the Army may wish to pay special attention to removing the formal and informal barriers to the assignment of females to career enhancing, non-combat jobs.

A stronger distinction needs to be made between sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Taunts such as "women don't belong here" are not manifestations of sexual harassment behavior as suggested in the recent GAO testimony (Jones, 1992), but, rather, are expressions of a negative attitude toward women. Gender discrimination and the expression of negative attitudes toward women were more pervasive than sexual harassment in our interview respondents. Policy could be improved by separating the two issues and by explicitly specifying the kinds of behaviors and verbal comments which fall into each separate category which are unacceptable.

In addition to the clarification and expansion of policy suggested above, the training and enforcement of these policies may be an even more important issue for the Army. It is important that training be extensive, specific, and institutionalized reaching Army leaders at all levels. The enforcement, unlike what has been reported by interviewees, needs to be timely, strict, and consistent no matter who is involved.

It was clear from the interviews that, with regard to discrimination and sexual harassment, the perception is that the Army is saying one thing but doing another. There was a strong indication that there is an implicit culture allowing subtle and not so subtle discrimination and sexual harassment and that the policies were rarely enforced. Taken to the extreme, commanders may be communicating that acts of discrimination and harassment were "rewarded or approved" as part of the "good-ole boy" system. The method of training regarding discriminatory practices or sexual harassment could go a long way toward demonstrating the Army's commitment to equity and equality. However, just teaching equal opportunity as is done in the service academies may not be sufficient (Jones, 1992). Strict, consistent enforcement of the policies at all levels appears to be the only way to clearly communicate the importance of this issue. The Army must communicate, as it did with racial discrimination, that statements and actions directed at females are no longer tolerated in the Army--and their actions must match their words.

A review of the policies regarding joint domicile, particularly considering the limitations of the downsized Army, may be needed. Interviewees felt that realistically setting the possibilities for joint domicile up front and maintaining an attitude of cooperation could go a long way toward reducing the conflict around this issue. Females may still leave because there are reduced opportunities for joint domicile. However, they may be less likely to see it as an "uncooperative Army" problem.

This paper has implied that to influence quality Army officers to stay in the Army, both for the short and long term, the Army needs to "solve the downsizing problem;" communicate what the future Army will be, or at least a vision of the future; modify and enforce the discrimination and sexual harassment

policies; and remove, for all soldiers, the perceived arbitrary limitations to careers that are not mandated by job or assignment requirements. As indicated daily in the news media, many organizations are currently struggling with these same issues.

The Army, however, is unique in a number of ways that may make its job more difficult--the Army has always offered a "career" particularly to its officers, and soldiers see the Army as "more than just a job." The commitment and motivation necessary to join the Army may be intrinsically different than what is necessary for many civilian organizations. To effectively restructure the force, the roles and values of all soldiers may change and continue to change for a number of years. The Army may benefit by emphasizing the positive, reshaping of the evolving Army rather than the current emphasis on the more negative "downsizing."

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Appendix A
Telephone Interview Schedule for Female Officers

Date: _____ Female:____ Male:____
Name: _____
Branch _____
SSN: _____
Phone # _____
Current rank: CPT (P) _____ MAJOR _____ OTHER _____
SSB? _____ VSI? _____

Introduction

My name is _____. I'm from the U.S. Army Research Institute in Alexandria, VA. We have been conducting research on officer careers and the different reasons why people choose to stay in or leave the Army. We are currently contacting people who have signed up for the recent bonus programs to try to get an understanding of why officers are choosing the bonuses to leave the Army. We have several questions we would like to ask you about your Army career decisions. Do you have a few minutes to talk now? (If it is inconvenient to talk now, what would be a better time to talk?)

VERIFY RANK AND BRANCH

1. Why did you decide to leave the Army?

2. Did anything else influence your decision to leave?

3. When did you start thinking about leaving? (Why?)

4. When did you make your final decision to leave? (Why)

(Was it before or after you knew you were on the promotion list?

(Was it before or after the bonus offer?)

5. If you had not chosen to leave the Army at this time, how sure are you that you would have been allowed to stay in the Army

until retirement? Why/why not?

- (a) definitely yes
- (b) probably yes
- (c) not sure
- (d) probably no
- (e) definitely no

6. Do you already have a civilian job waiting for you? If yes, what kind of job is it? _____

- (a) definitely yes
- (b) probably yes
- (c) not sure
- (d) probably no
- (e) definitely no

7. Did downsizing influence your decision to leave? How?

8. Has conflict between your family and your career influenced your decision to leave? How?

9. IF NOT VOLUNTEERED IN QUES # 8 ASK:

Are you married	Yes	No
IF MARRIED ASK:		
Is your spouse in the military?	Yes	No
Do you have any children?	Yes	No

10. What could the Army have done to have convinced you to stay?

11. Did your experiences as a female soldier contribute in any way toward your decision to leave the Army?

Appendix B
In-person Interview Schedule for Company Grade Officers

Date: _____ 1992 Female:___ Male:___

Name: _____

SSN: _____

Unit assigned to: _____

Branch: _____

Year Group: _____

Rank: 1LT___ CPT___ CPT (P)___ MAJOR___ OTHER___

Regular Army___ Other than Regular Army___

INTRODUCTION

My name is _____. I'm from the U.S. Army Research Institute in Alexandria, VA. We have been conducting research on officer careers and are here today to ask you about your career and the factors that have influenced your career decisions along the way.

GIVE OUT AND EXPLAIN PRIVACY ACT

PRECOMMISSIONING

1. What was your source of commissioning?

USMA _____
ROTC _____ Number of years _____
OCS _____
OTHER _____

2. What was the date of your commission? _____

3. On your Precommissioning Preference statement, what were your branch preferences?

CA _____
CS/CSS _____

4. Of these branches, which one did you really want? _____

5. On your Precommissioning Preference statement, what were your assignment preferences?

Conventional FA battalion _____
Target battery _____
Lance battalion _____
Pershing officer _____
other _____

6. Prior to commissioning, how long did you plan to stay in the Army? _____ Why?

7. How many years was your initial obligation? _____
Why?

AS A SECOND LIEUTENANT (2LT):

8. When you were commissioned, what courses (if any) did you take in addition to the Officer Basic Course? Why?

9. As a 2LT, what was the first position you held?

10. What determined your getting that particular position?

11. Did you hold any other positions as a 2LT? _____ What?

12. When were you promoted to 1LT? _____

13. Is that the standard length of time?

AS A FIRST LIEUTENANT (1LT):

14. As a 1LT, what was the first position you held?

15. What determined your getting that particular position?

16. Did you hold any other positions as a 1LT? _____ What?

17. When were you promoted to 1LT? _____

18. Is that the standard length of time?

AS A CAPTAIN (CPT) :

19. When you were promoted to captain, what courses (if any) did you take in addition to the Officer Advanced Course? Why?

20. As a CPT, what was the first position you held?

21. What determined your getting that particular position?

22. Did you hold any other positions as a CPT? _____ What?

23. When were you promoted to CPT? _____

24. Is that the standard length of time?

CURRENT

25. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT WILL BE? WHAT?

26. WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER PLANS NOW?

27. What kind of things helped you get ahead in your career?

28. What kind of things held you back?

29. At any point did you feel that you had a mentor?

30. At any point, did anyone help you get the particular position you wanted?

31. Are you: Married?
 Children?
 Spouse military?

32. What might cause you to change your mind about staying?

33. How are things that are happening in the Army right now impacting on your career plans and decisions?

34. How satisfied are you with the branch you are in? How easy would it be to change it?

FOR THOSE WHO SAY THEY PLAN TO LEAVE ARMY:

ASK QUESTIONS FROM THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW THAT ARE RELEVANT TO ALL OFFICERS (IF THEY HAVE NOT BEEN COVERED IN THE INTERVIEW ALREADY).

1. Why did you decide to leave the Army?

2. When did you start thinking about leaving? (Why?)

3. When did you make your final decision to leave? (Was it before or after the bonus offers?)

4. If you had not chosen to leave the Army at this time, how sure are you that you would have been allowed to stay in the Army until retirement? Why/why not?
 - (a) definitely yes
 - (b) probably yes
 - (c) not sure
 - (d) probably no
 - (e) definitely no

5. Do you already have a civilian job waiting for you?
If yes, what kind of job is it? _____
 - (a) definitely yes
 - (b) probably yes
 - (c) not sure
 - (d) probably no
 - (e) definitely no

4. Did downsizing influence your decision to leave? How?

5. Has conflict between your family and your career influenced your decision to leave?

6. What could the Army have done to have convinced you to stay?